

THE HEALTH INFORMATION
PRIVACY ACT OF 1999

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 25, 1999

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join Reps. GARY CONDIT, ED MARKEY, JOHN DINGELL, SHERRON BROWN, JIM TURNER, and my other colleagues in introducing the Health Information Privacy Act of 1999. There is an urgent need for Congress to enact legislation to protect the privacy of medical records. We have worked hard to develop a consensus approach to achieve this goal.

Health records contain some of our most personal information. Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive federal law that protects the privacy of medical records. As a result, we face a constant threat of serious privacy intrusions. Our records can be bought and sold for commercial gain, disclosed to employers, and used to deny us insurance. There have been numerous disturbing reports of such inappropriate use and disclosure of health information.

When individual have inadequate control over their health information, our health care system as a whole suffers. For example, a recent survey by the California HealthCare Foundation found that one out of every seven adults has done something "out of the ordinary" to keep health information confidential, including steps such as giving inaccurate information to their providers or avoiding care together.

The Health Information Privacy Act would protect the privacy of health information and ensure that individuals have appropriate control over their health records. It is based on three fundamental principles. First, health information should not be used or disclosed without the authorization or knowledge of the individual, except in narrow circumstances where there is an overriding public interest. Second, individuals should have fundamental rights regarding their health records, such as the right to access, copy, and amend their records, and the opportunity to seek protection for especially sensitive information. Third, federal legislation should provide a "floor," not a "ceiling," so that states and the Secretary of Health and Human Services can establish additional protections as appropriate.

Congress faces an August 21 deadline for passing comprehensive legislation to protect the privacy of health information. I am very pleased to have come together with Mr. CONDIT, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. DINGELL, Mr. BROWN, and Mr. TURNER in developing this common-sense legislation. These members have been leaders in health care and privacy issues for years. As a result of their expertise and insight, I believe we have produced a consensus bill that colleagues with a wide spectrum of perspective can support.

A recent editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* exhorted Congress to "fulfill its promise to pass the nation's first medical privacy bill." It called for legislators in both houses to "embrace [this] compromise language" that my colleagues and I have drafted.

I hope that my colleagues will join me in co-sponsoring this legislation, and I look forward to working with them to ensure that Congress meets its responsibility to address this important issue.

INTRODUCING LEGISLATION TO
AWARD A CONGRESSIONAL GOLD
MEDAL TO REV. THEODORE
HESBURGH, C.S.C.

HON. TIM ROEMER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 25, 1999

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C. I introduce this bill with Representatives PETER KING, JOHN LEWIS, PETE VISCLOSKEY, MARK SOUDER, ANNE NORTHUP and 85 original cosponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives. It is my understanding that a companion bill will be introduced in the U.S. Senate later today.

This bipartisan legislation recognizes Father Hesburgh for his many outstanding contributions to the United States and the global community. The bill authorizes the President to award a gold medal to Father Hesburgh on behalf of the United States Congress. It also authorizes the U.S. Mint to strike and sell duplicates to the public.

The public service career of Father Hesburgh, president emeritus of the University of Notre Dame, is as distinguished as his many educational contributions. Over the years, he has held 15 Presidential appointments and he has remained a national leader in the fields of education, civil rights and the development of the Third World. Highlighting a lengthy list of awards to Father Hesburgh is the Medal of Freedom, our Nation's highest civilian honor, bestowed on him by President Johnson in 1964.

Mr. Speaker, justice has been the primary focus of Father Hesburgh's pursuits throughout his life. He was a charter member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, created by Congress in 1957 as a compromise to end a filibuster in the U.S. Senate to prevent passage of any and all legislation concerning civil rights in general and voting rights in particular. Father Hesburgh chaired the commission from 1969 to 1972, until President Nixon replaced him as chairman because of his criticism of the Administration's civil rights record.

Father Hesburgh stepped down as head of the University of Notre Dame in 1987, ending the longest tenure among active presidents of American institutions of higher learning. He continues in retirement much as he did as the Nation's senior university chief executive officer—as a leading educator and humanitarian inspiring generations of students and citizens, and generously sharing his wisdom in the struggle for the rights of man.

I am personally grateful to Father Hesburgh for his friendship and guidance during my years as a student at the University of Notre Dame. My family shares my gratitude. My grandfather, William Roemer, was a professor of philosophy during the early years of Father Hesburgh's presidency, and my parents, Jim and Mary Ann Roemer, also worked during his tenure at the University.

Mr. Speaker, I once asked Father Hesburgh for advice about how to raise a happy and healthy family with children. His reply was helpful, insightful and advice I continue to follow today: "Love their mother." I strongly believe Father Hesburgh's response here was just one of many shining examples illustrating

that his contributions to family values in American society are as numerous and meaningful as his devoted contributions to human rights, education, the Catholic Church and the global community.

Mr. Speaker, today is Father Hesburgh's 82nd birthday, and I believe that this is the most appropriate time for Congress and the entire Nation to join me in recognizing this remarkable man and living legend of freedom in America. I strongly encourage my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation and urge the House of Representatives to pass this important measure.

RUTH HYMAN TESTIMONIAL DINNER AT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF MONMOUTH COUNTY

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 25, 1999

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, June 3, 1999, the Jewish Community Center of Greater Monmouth County in Deal, NJ, will honor one of our leading citizens, Ms. Ruth Hyman, with a Testimonial Dinner. I am pleased to add my voice to the chorus of praise for this exceptional lady.

Mr. Speaker, it is rare to see someone who has made such an impact on her community as Ruth Hyman has. Through her professional work, civic commitments, wide-ranging network of friendships and a unique personal flair, she has made a deep and lasting impression. Her accomplishments include her apparel business, Ruth Hyman Fashions, and a lifetime of work with numerous Jewish community organizations. Ruth is currently the President of the Long Branch, NJ, Hadassah, a Benefactor and Board Member of the Jewish Community Center, Board Member of the Jewish Family and Children's Service, and Member of Congregation of Brothers of Israel. She was the first Chairperson of the Women's Business and Professional Division of the Jewish Federation. Some of her other affiliations and leadership positions include, Past President and International Life Member of American Red Magen David for Israel, life member of Daughters of Miriam, AMIT, B'nai Brith, Past President of Deborah, and Life Member of the Central New Jersey Home for the Aged. She is also Chairperson of the Women's Division of Israel Bonds, a position she has held for the past 25 years.

All of this hard work has not gone unnoticed, Mr. Speaker. Ruth has been presented with the Hadassah National Leadership Award and the Service Award from the Jewish Federation's Women's Campaign, and she was selected as Chai Honoree and Woman of the Year of the Long Branch Chapter of Hadassah. She was chosen by the Jewish Federation as Lay Leader of the Year. She has been presented with the State of Israel Bonds Golda Meir Award, the Service Award from the Jewish Federation Women's Campaign, and the State of Israel Bonds Ben Gurion Award.

In addition to her major contributions at the Jewish Community Center, Ruth is founder of Hadassah Hospital at Ein Kerem, Israel, and the Mt. Scopus Hospital, where her name is inscribed on the hospital's Pillar of Hope.